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# Economic and Social Council

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**Commission on the Status of Women**
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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals**

## Statement by New Japan Women's Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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## Statement

1. Since its foundation in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association (NJWA) has been working for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the rights of women and children and to create a global women's solidarity for peace, among other issues. As a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, NJWA has attended United Nations World Conferences on Women and sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women.

2. For the fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and its review process, NJWA presented reports on the situation of Japanese women and the problems of the national effort for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and took part in follow-up work at the regional (Asia-Pacific) and global levels.

3. Since the 1975 International Women's Year, the United Nations and the women's movement have worked together to achieve the goals of gender equality, development and peace. In the context of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women at which Member States will undertake the 15-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the review of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, NJWA recommends taking the following issues into account, in order for the Beijing+15 review to produce effective outcomes.

### Gender equality

4. The Global Gender Gap Report 2009, published by the World Economic Forum, says there is still much work to be done in education, health, the workplace, legislation and politics before women enjoy the same opportunities as men. It points to such problems as the gap between girls and boys in access to education and health care because of the lower value placed on girls, women facing barriers to entering the workforce or to accessing leadership positions and vast underrepresentation of women in political leadership and decision-making. It then asserts that the combined impact of these gaps entails colossal losses to the global society and economy.

5. In February 2008, the Secretary-General launched the campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women". According to the World Bank and the World Health Organization, up to 70 per cent of women experience physical or sexual violence from men, with one in five women likely to be raped in their lifetime. Early marriage causes health risks to young women and more than 130 million women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation, with 2 million girls a year being at risk of female genital mutilation. Many women are subjected to other forms of harmful practices such as dowry murders and honour killings. Women continue to be in disadvantageous positions in employment, earning much less than men, and the situation was even worsened owing to the economic crisis. It is essential for Member States to display their political will to fully implement international agreements such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Beijing+5 outcomes and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

6. NJWA welcomes General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence, adopted by the Assembly in September 2009, which contains the proposal to create a new single women's agency headed by an Under-Secretary-General. NJWA joins other non-governmental organizations in calling for a strong

mandate and substantial funding to be given to the entity, so that it can display political leadership for advancing women's rights and gender equality. It urges Member States not only to support the women's agency but also to take this opportunity to strengthen their own national machineries.

**Development**

7. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report 2009 says that despite important gains, progress is too slow to meet the Goals. As the emerging issues such as the economic crisis, food shortages and climate change pose obstacles to the effort, more financial assistance from developed countries is necessary. Worldwide, the number of people living in extreme poverty fell from 1.8 billion in 1990 to 1.4 billion in 2005, but the World Bank reported in September 2009 that the economic crisis would force 89 million more people into extreme poverty by the end of 2010. The 2009 Global Hunger Index, published by the International Food Policy Research Institute and other groups, shows that hunger has decreased globally with overall scores improving from "alarming" (20.0) in 1990 to "serious" (15.2) in 2009, but the Global Hunger Index of the 29 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia exceeds the "alarming" level, with malnutrition increasing among children. Comparing the Global Hunger Index with the Global Gender Gap Index, the International Food Policy Research Institute report finds that the countries with an improved Global Hunger Index have achieved progress in women's access to education, their participation in politics and their involvement in the economy. The key solution to global hunger therefore is reducing gender disparities, particularly in education and health.

8. According to estimates by the United Nations Development Programme and other organizations, women represent 70 per cent of the world's poor, although they perform 66 per cent of the world's work and produce 50 per cent of the food. The International Labour Organization estimates that owing to the economic crisis, 22 million more women will lose their jobs, pushing up the female unemployment rate to 7.4 per cent while the rate for men is expected to be 7 per cent. These facts show that women are highly underrepresented in economic decision-making positions. Believing that the current development paradigm should be reviewed so that development policies can advance the empowerment of women and the Millennium Development Goals, NJWA urges Member States to:

(a) Incorporate gender perspectives into economic and employment policies, and increase the participation of women in decision-making;

(b) Employ gender-responsive budgeting with a mechanism for tracking and assessing public fund investments;

(c) Increase aid to accelerate the effort for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and take note of the need for financing for gender equality and the needs of the local populations with particular attention to women;

(d) Study consequences of climate change and the damage inflicted by frequent natural disasters on the socially vulnerable, including women, to work out measures to address those issues from gender perspectives.

**Peace**

9. NJWA reiterates its support for Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, and Council resolution 1820 (2008) on the

elimination of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. It further welcomes the recent adoption of Council resolutions 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) focusing on the implementation of the previous two resolutions. NJWA will work for the promotion of their implementation, including through information dissemination. NJWA underscores that the four resolutions identify women not only as victims of conflict and violence but also as key players in conflict resolution, prevention and peacebuilding.

10. As a women's organization in Japan with first-hand experience of tragic atomic bombing, NJWA has been a strong advocate for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Now that the President of the United States of America, which remains the only State with nuclear power to have used nuclear weapons, has committed himself to achieving a "world without nuclear weapons", there is a great opportunity to push nuclear disarmament forward, particularly at the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. A collective effort towards nuclear abolition will prompt each State to redefine its security policy and eventually to substantially reduce military spending, thus paving the way to abolishing war. Nuclear abolition can be an effective way not only to prevent catastrophe but also to redirect resources to human needs.

11. Even today, wars, conflicts and occupation by foreign troops continue in many nations and women are trying to sustain their families and communities while at risk of sexual violence and human rights violations. In countries such as Japan, where foreign military bases are hosted, women and all other people living around the bases are at risk of being subjected to sexual assaults and other heinous crimes by military personnel and suffer the unbearable noise from airplanes. NJWA, a non-governmental organization in a country with a war-renouncing Constitution, urges the Government of Japan to make use of the Constitution's peace principles in diplomacy, and hopes other countries will follow the examples of Latin American countries to incorporate a peace clause into their law towards a world without war.

12. NJWA urges Member States at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to:

(a) Commit themselves to Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) and take concrete measures for their implementation;

(b) Incorporate a gender perspective into diplomacy and security policies and increase women's representation in decision-making positions;

(c) Drastically cut military spending and redirect resources away from military security towards human security and the effort for achieving the Millennium Development Goals;

(d) Rely on peaceful means for resolving conflicts. Recalling that the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly (resolution 1(I)) called for the elimination of atomic weapons, Member States at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women should appeal for a substantial outcome to be produced at the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and for the start of negotiations on an international treaty banning and eliminating nuclear weapons.